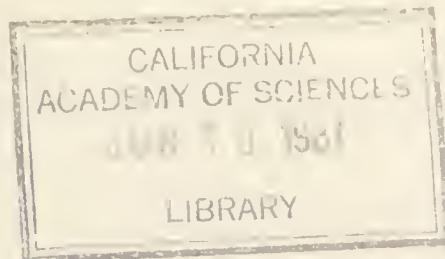


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0164-971X



# the Gull

Volume 63

Berkeley, Calif

July-August 1981

Number 7

## Field Trips Calendar

*\$ indicates entrance fee required*

**Saturday, July 11—Bear Valley to Limantour, Pt. Reyes.** This hiking trip is about ten miles in length, with an ascent of approximately 700 feet before we go down to Limantour. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Larkspur Ferry Terminal (section H) for carpooling or at the Bear Valley National Seashore Headquarters near Olema at 8:30 a.m. We will return from Limantour to Bear Valley by shuttlebus in the late afternoon. Pack a lunch and liquids. Binoculars are optional but good walking shoes are required. Please contact the leader if you plan to participate. Leader: Keiko Yamane (751-9119). (✓)

**Sunday, July 12—Chimney Rock, Pt. Reyes.** Join us for our annual trip to see nesting Black Oystercatchers and Western Gulls. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Pt. Reyes National Seashore Headquarters near Olema. We will caravan to the coast. Bring lunch, liquids and a spotting scope if you have one. Leader: Betty Short (921-3020). (✓)

**Saturday, July 25—San Mateo County Coast.** Meet at Pescadero Beach parking lot at the intersection of Hwy. 1 and Pescadero Rd. at 8 a.m. Please carpool to this point if possible; parking is limited. Bring lunch and a light jacket; the weather can be cool along the coast. Brown Pelicans, Heermann's Gulls and Black Oystercatchers are probable. We may also see Harlequin Ducks, Black Swifts and Bank Swallows at Año Nuevo. Leader: Jon Zablackis (527-2083). (\$)(✓)

**Saturday/Sunday, August 1-2—Yosemite National Park** On Saturday meet at the roadhead for May Lake at 8:30 a.m. for an all-day

alpine ecology trip up Mt. Hoffman. Take the May Lake turnoff from Hwy. 120 (Tioga Pass Rd.) and proceed several miles to the end of the road. The pace up this rather steep trail will be slow with a number of stops for birds, flowers, etc., but the walk requires some stamina. The round trip is about six miles. On Sunday we will meet at **8 a.m.** at the parking area just before the Tioga Pass entrance station on Hwy. 120. From there we will drive a short distance to the Saddlebag Lake area, where we will hike up to the Carnegie Institute Timberline Station to see firsthand the study work on the Subalpine Breeding Bird Community being conducted by Dave DeSante. Round trip hike is about three miles, so we should return to the cars by mid-afternoon for those driving back to the Bay Area. Contact the Yosemite Park & Curry Co. at (209) 373-4171 for accommodations at May Lake High Sierra Camp (hike-in), Tuolumne Meadows High Sierra Camp and White Wolf Lodge. Camping will be available at Tuolumne Meadows and White Wolf campgrounds. Check with the National Park Service Public Information at (209) 372-4461, Ext. 248, for information about reservations and up-to-date campground information. Leader: George Peyton (444-3131) weekdays only.

**Saturday, August 8—Palo Alto Flood Control Basin.** Meet at **8:30 a.m.** for this morning trip to the ponds and sloughs south of the Palo Alto Baylands Refuge. From Hwy. 101 exit at Embarcadero Ave. Go east under the freeway to the first stop light and turn right on Frontage Rd. Drive south to the large open area south of the large pond. If you reach the El Camino Kennels you have gone too far. Summerring ducks, egrets and herons are the main attraction. Forster's and Least Terns, White Pelicans and a little Blue Heron may be seen in the south bay at this time of year. Leader: Ted Chandik (493-5330). (✓)

**Saturday/Sunday, August 15-16—Mt. Pinos for California Condors.** Meet at **8 a.m.** to watch for California Condors at Mt. Pinos Condor Observation Point. We should see a variety of other species common to the high mountains of California in summer. Be prepared for hot days at lower elevations. At the top of Mt. Pinos it may be windy and cold, so bring a warm jacket, a hat and sun screen. Bring your scope, lunch and liquids both days.

From the Bay Area drive south on I-5 past the town of Grapevine (south of Bakersfield) to the Frazier Park off-ramp. If you reach Gorman

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*Published each month except August by the Golden Gate Audubon Society, office address 2718 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94705. Second class postage paid in Berkeley, CA. (THE GULL - USPS 417-705)*

you have gone too far. From I-5 go west past Frazier Park, through Lake-of-the-Woods and follow the signs (N.W.) toward the Mt. Pinos Recreation Area. The road passes through Cuddy Valley and a yellow pine forest. It ends at a large parking lot. From there take the dirt road to the left for about a mile to the asphalt parking lot where we will meet (8 a.m.). The road is very rough but it is passable if you drive slowly. Camping is available in Los Padres National Forest. McGill Campground provides the best facilities and fine birding. It is located on the road to the observation area. It may be wise to arrive before mid-afternoon Friday because McGill and other campgrounds may fill for the weekend. Motels and restaurants are available at Gorman and other nearby towns. Leader: Eben McMillan. For additional information call Dan Murphy (564-0074) during early August or Shirley Kelly (387-8290). (✓)

**Saturday, September 26—Bus trip to Monterey Bay area.** We will ride in the comfort of a chartered bus to many of Monterey's finest birding areas, including the municipal pier, the shoreline to Pt. Pinos and the Carmel River mouth. Our leader will be Ted Chandik. The bus will depart from the East Bay at 6:30 a.m. and make stops in San Francisco and Palo Alto. The fare will be \$20 per person.

Reservations will be given to the first 35 respondents. Send a self-addressed stamped envelope and check made payable to Golden Gate Audubon Society to the GGAS office, 2718 Telegraph Ave., #206, Berkeley, CA 94705. Details of the trip will be sent with an acknowledgment of your check.

**Carpooling arrangements** can be made for trips marked (✓). Call Kate Partridge at 642-1733 (work hours) or 236-9853 (home) and leave a message. She will contact you.

**Problems:** If for any reason you have difficulty getting in touch with a field trip leader or need information regarding a trip, call Dan Murphy (564-0074), Shirley Kelly (387-8290), or the GGAS office (843-2222). *The office will be closed during the month of August — see below.*

—FIELD TRIPS COMMITTEE

## GGAS Office Closed in August

During the month of August, the GGAS office will be closed to members and the general public. We have usually done this in the past to allow time to catch up on filing and reorganizing; this year Jerry will be breaking in his replacement as well.

Important messages, which will be answered at the end of each week, may be left on the office recording device. Normal office hours (9 a.m.-4 p.m., Monday - Friday) will resume starting September 1.

## Panama: January 9-24, 1982

Due to the resounding success of last January's Panama tour GGAS is again sponsoring a trip to the "land bridge of the Americas." There is no better area in Latin America where such a variety of abundant bird, plant and mammal life can be seen so easily and comfortably. With good weather, fine accommodations and excellent food, Panama is the perfect place to experience the tropics. Our last trip had a list of 448 species seen, including Three-Wattled Bellbird, Sunbittern, Blue Cotinga, Black Hawk-Eagle, Chestnut-Mandibled Toucan, Great Potoo, 22 species of tanagers, 29 species of hummingbirds, an incredible 54 species of flycatchers and the Resplendent Quetzal among the six species of trogons seen by every member of the tour.

Tour leaders are again Joe Morlan and Chris Carpenter. Joe, who is co-author of *Birds of Northern California* and compiler of the GGAS rare bird alert, has birded in Mexico and Panama. Chris has led several GGAS trips and has birded in Mexico and Costa Rica. This will be his third trip to Panama.

Price of the tour will be \$1795, which will include all food, lodging and transportation except airfare to and from Panama. The tour is limited to 15 participants. For a detailed itinerary contact the GGAS office or call Joe at 524-7421 or Chris at 376-6802.

## May Observations — through May 31

### SE FARALLON AND EARLY WATERBIRDS

"Consistent, strong northwest winds with accompanying clear skies" virtually eliminated migrant landbirds on the Farallones; the only two vagrants are mentioned below. All Farallon records are by Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory and are reported by Teya McElroy. Southeast Farallon's rarest bird was an American Coot on May 12. The Island's daily coverage documented the early return of Brown Pelicans, 11 by May 19. Numbers were also advanced coastally. Perhaps related was the early arrival of three Elegant Terns at the Bay Bridge Toll Plaza May 25 (KC, MB).

### LATE LINGERERS

Golden Gate Park's Eurasian Green-winged Teal was indeed resighted through May 31 (North Lake-FN, LN, DM), so it is probably an escapee. Blue-winged Teal, however, is a late migrant, so the two that touched down with the Eurasian May 31 (DM) and the two at Pescadero Marsh the same day (MD) were presumably wild. The male and female Old-

squaws at Moss Landing were still there May 9 and should summer (SFB). Conversely, it would be surprising if the male Harlequin Duck at Marshall, Tomales Bay, May 6 (CS) remained there, despite this species' resident status at Año Nuevo. A first winter Mew Gull at Bay Bridge Toll Plaza May 24 was extremely late; this gull very seldom summers in California (SFB). Rare at any time and unprecedently late was the breeding plumaged adult **Little Gull** still at Stockton Sewage Ponds May 13 (CJ). The singing adult White-throated Sparrow in Bear Valley, Pt. Reyes National Seashore, May 9 (RSi, KHi) may have been late departing or alternatively an eastern vagrant.

### MISCELLANEOUS WATERBIRDS

Once again an oceanographic survey cruise found gadfly petrels within California waters. During mid-May at least **24 Solander's Petrels** (*Pterodroma solandri*) were identified 35-70 miles offshore between Pt. Reyes and Oregon (RP). As the identification of large dark gadfly petrels (and most others!) is somewhat problematical, acceptance of this species onto our state list by the Records Committee cannot be assumed, but the fact that the observer also discovered the Cook's Petrels of 1979 lends credence. A wandering Clapper Rail surprised observers at a small pond at Diablo Valley College April 28 (CN). A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** in breeding plumage was the only peep present on the entire Emeryville Crescent May 24 (SFB). This is consistent with the departure dates of Western and Least Sandpipers and the phenology of our spring vagrant shorebirds. Although easier to identify at this season, Semipalmated Sandpiper is much rarer in spring than in fall.

### REPEATERS

The year's first report of a Tufted Puffin hanging around Pt. Reyes was one at Chimney Rock May 31 (BJ). At least six Purple Martins still nest above Five Brooks, as noted May 25 (KY, NC, GH, *et al.*). The male **Great-tailed Grackle** continued to be seen at the foot of Van Ness by Fort Mason and Aquatic Park at least through May 9 (KH), so it is likely that the pair is again attempting to nest.

### INTERIOR BIRDS COASTWARD

This category proved an assortment. A White-faced Ibis visited Crittenden Marsh, beside Moffett Field, May 8 (RJ). The third Marin County record of Lesser Nighthawk was of two at Bolinas April 19 (BD, PC) with one remaining two more days (CS, DDeS, EG). Scarce migrants on the coast included a Calliope Hummingbird at Drakes Beach May 21 (RS), a Western Kingbird at Año Nuevo May 10 (SFB, *et al.*), a Sage Thrasher banded at Palomarin May 9-10 (PRBO), a Yellow-

breasted Chat in Lincoln Park, San Francisco, May 12 (AH) and a Brewer's Sparrow near Drakes Beach May 10 (DT). Less out of habitat was a Green-tailed Towhee on Mount Diablo May 6-10 (JE, MDAS, BR). Two Lawrence's Goldfinches were at Fish Docks May 31 (JG, MG). This species seems to stray coastward mostly in early or late summer.

### EASTERN VAGRANT PASSERINES

Late May produced the usual trickle of vagrant warblers on Pt. Reyes and elsewhere:

Black-and-white Warbler			
banded	Palomarin	May 11	PRBO
male	Fish Docks	May 28-30	MuB, mob
Tennessee Warbler			
1	Pt. Reyes Lighthouse	April 30	DS, GH
male	Tennessee Valley	May 17	GH
male	SE Farallon	May 19	PRBO
Northern Parula			
male	Annadel State Park	May 9	RA
male	Lincoln Park, S.F.	May 17	JM, mob
Cape May Warbler			
1	Pt. Reyes Lighthouse	May 20	DS
male	Pt. Reyes Lighthouse	May 25	MG, et al.
Palm Warbler			
1	East Vallejo	May 12	GS
Ovenbird			
1	Mendoza Ranch	May 25	MG, et al.
male	Lincoln Park, S.F.	May 31	NB
Northern Waterthrush			
1	Inverness Ridge	May 25	RS
Kentucky Warbler			
male	Lincoln Park, S.F.	May 16	AH, mob
American Redstart			
male	Drakes Beach	May 31	JG, JM, KH, GH

Almost all individuals identified as male were singing, including the Kentucky Warbler, California's 15th and the first Bay Area mainland record. I've often thought that this early-arriving southeastern warbler should be better represented here in May; until 1979 all Farallon records were in June or July. With two more records this May in the desert there are now four there from late April and May. The Tennessee Warbler in Tennessee Valley surely qualifies for homonymous listing.

An adult male Summer Tanager at the Hastings Natural History Reservation, upper Carmel Valley, May 2 and subsequently (DG, BH, et al.) appeared to be of the expected eastern race (BH). Our first territorial male Indigo Bunting of the summer appeared along the Ft. Ross Rd. from Cazadero May 25 (DB, PCo). Will it stay? A Lark Bunting was found at Pt. Reyes Lighthouse April 30 (DS, GH), one day after a Clay-colored Sparrow was on SE Farallon (PRBO).

**Addendum:** The Ruff at San Luis March 30 was most likely the same one found at the Los Banos refuge on the Christmas Count.

**Observers:** Roy Aijala, Stephen F. Bailey, Dennis Beall, Murray Berner (MuB), Marc Better (MB), Ed Bilskey, Neil Blank, Kurt Campbell, Pamela Conly (PCo), Nancy Conzett, Patsy Cristaeuh (PC), Maryanne Danielson, Dave DeSante, Barbara Duehl, Jim Edgar, Gail Friedlander, David Good, Ed Good, Michael Green, Jeff Greenhouse, Kem Hainebach (KH), Barkley Hastings, Kevin Hinsu (KHi), Alan Hopkins, George Hugenberg, Richard Jeffers, Bill Jones, Christine Jones, Joe Morlan, Dan Murphy, Cliff Nelson, Fran Nelson, Leroy Nelson, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Robert Pitman, Bob Richmond, Don Schmoldt, Genevieve Sears, Dave Shuford (DS), Rich Sinchak (RSi), Mount Diablo Audubon Society, Rich Stallecup (RS), Chris Swarth, Dorothy Tobkin, Keiko Yamane.

—STEPHEN F. BAILEY, *Observations Editor*  
Museum of Vertebrate Zoology  
University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720

(phone 548-9507; or Karen L. Bailey at 642-3327 8 a.m.-noon, 1-5 p.m.)

## Conservation Notes

### CONDOR PERMIT - ROUND TWO

The fate of the California Condor may be decided on July 28 at a hearing before the California Department of Fish and Game Commission in Los Angeles. At that time the Commission will decide whether to grant permission to the Fish and Wildlife Service to go ahead with its controversial Condor Recovery Program which includes attaching radio-telemetry devices to wild condors and the initiation of a captive breeding program.

GGAS finds two aspects of the permit application especially troublesome. The first involves the request which would allow Condor Recovery Team members to enter active nests and take eggs or nestlings, measure nestlings and attach telemetry devices to them.

The second is the fact that while the proposal initially called for removal of nine condors from the wild for captive breeding and the radio-tagging of 13 birds, now the language seems to indicate a desire to capture an unlimited number. The application reads, "The number, age and sex of condors to be radio-tagged or taken into captivity is subject to change upon consultation with and agreement by the California Department of Fish and Game."

The application for renewal of the Condor Recovery Program has deeply concerned members of GGAS and of other environmental organizations. The hands-on approach, including removal of adult birds,

nestlings and eggs from the wild, is viewed by many as an unjustified and dangerous intrusion. Biologists Roland Case Ross and Richard J. Vogl commented, "We think the Recovery Team should stop all handling, capture and disturbance of condors. A captive breeding program is premature and detracts from more important issues that should be addressed first . . . Present activities should be replaced with habitat restoration and management of ecosystems that provide food and feeding sites for condors."

Fundamental questions are being raised about the risks of initiating captive breeding. No one knows whether California Condors will breed in cages. Andean Condors did not breed for seven years after being taken into captivity. Even if successfully released, there is the risk that captive-bred birds will not breed in the wild, as has been the case in other species including the Andean Condor to date and, until recently, the Peregrine Falcon.

Perhaps the greatest risks, however, are the impacts of human intrusion on the wild population. Condor biologists Carl Koford and Alden Miller both argued strongly against human intrusion in condor nesting areas. Their fear became reality last summer when a condor chick died after being handled. The risk of injury or death to remaining condor chicks and adults should not be repeated. The removal of half the wild condor population in three years is a drastic action, with the foreseeable impact that of rendering the remaining wild birds unable to survive.

Secretary of the Interior James Watt has recently proposed lifting the ban on Compound 1080, a highly toxic poison which has been linked to the condors' decline and one which was banned almost ten years ago by President Nixon. For years man has exploited the natural environment unchecked, leaving a path of devastation in his wake. As a result, native wildlife is displaced, destroyed or driven to extinction; the California Condor is certainly on the brink of being in this last category.

The GGAS Board of Directors urges all members to write expressing their concerns about the approval of this new permit request. The deadline for comments on the permit is *July 17*. Your letters, as well as letters from your interested friends, are urgently needed now. Direct them to:

Mr. Harold Cribbs, Executive Secretary  
California Fish and Game Commission  
1416 Ninth St.  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Because *The Gull* will not be published again until September, we are compiling a list of GGAS members who wish to be advised of current developments. Please let us know if you would like to be on this list. If you want more information or would like a copy of the permit application, please call the GGAS office (843-2222) or Robin Pulich (848-3594).

—ROBIN PULICH, *Condor Subcommittee*

## PRBO NEWSLETTER DEVOTED TO CONDOR ISSUE

The Point Reyes Bird Observatory has published a special issue devoted entirely to the California Condor and the controversy surrounding the captive breeding program in which many views are presented.

The first four articles are a general introduction to the question of whether there should be such a large scale, costly, highly manipulative recovery program at all (articles by S. Dillon Ripley, Frank Pitelka, Telford Work and Rich Stallcup).

The last two articles (one by John Ogden and Noel Snyder and one by Dave DeSante) address details of the Condor Recovery Program, raising issues that will be of major concern at the hearings before the California Fish and Game Commission this summer.

Copies of the newsletter may be obtained from PRBO, 4990 Shoreline Hwy., Stinson Beach, CA 94970 for \$1 each.

## THE MONO LAKE CAMPAIGN

GGAS's year-long effort to help save Mono Lake is more than half completed. The kickoff in December with the Christmas Count dedicated to Mono Lake not only established the spirit of the campaign, but also brought in the first donations to help support the law suit, which is the greatest hope for ultimate saving of this unique lake. The March, April and May catalog sales, carried in *The Gull*, have been successful. Almost all of the 75 donated items, ranging from original works of art through author-autographed books to outdoor equipment, have been sold. Call GGAS to find out which few items are still available. Not only are all prices discounted, but all funds received go to help Mono Lake.

Two big Mono Lake events took place in May. First, the chapter sent out a direct appeal to all members for funds to help save Mono Lake, accompanied by an eloquent supporting letter from renowned author and conservationist Wallace Stegner. The response has been unprecedented and it is obvious that Mono's plight strikes home to our Northern California members. As of this writing, returns are still coming in. If you haven't already done so, send your contribution now—no matter how small. Second, the Conservation Committee hosted the May general

membership meeting with David Gaines, Mr. Mono Lake himself, as the major speaker. His talk and slides were equally impressive. Two bonus events further added to this special meeting: the formal presentation of the REI grant of \$1,500 to GGAS and David Gaines to support a summer educational program at Lee Vining and the first public display of the Mono Lake quilt. It was a meeting to remember.

Attention is now turning to planning the fall Mono extravaganza when the November 14 membership meeting will bring to a close the year-long campaign. A benefit drawing will be held at that meeting, with the lucky winners receiving a number of prizes. The handmade quilt depicts Mono Lake flora & fauna. Designed by Ric Hugo and Helen Green and made by Helen and her volunteer quilters, it must be seen to be appreciated, for it is a great combination of art and craftsmanship. An original water color of a Ruddy Duck by Doug Gomke is another outstanding and unique prize. A pair of cross country skis, an exceptionally beautiful book by Galen Rowell, a famed Mono-scape photograph by Michael Beaucage and dinner for two at the Pelican Inn at Muir Beach round out the prizes. Tickets are now available for the drawing, with a recommended donation of \$1 each. All members are urged to call the GGAS office to buy tickets and to obtain others to sell. All prizes will be on display prior to the November meeting.

After November, a full financial report on the year-long campaign for Mono Lake will be published in *The Gull*. All California Audubon chapters are undertaking fund-raising events to help defray the costs of the Mono Lake law suit and, as the largest Audubon chapter in the state (and the country), our aim is to raise the most money of all. Join us in this effort by helping to sell benefit tickets.

—AFTON CROOKS, *Mono Lake Subcommittee*

## A CHANCE TO HELP SOLVE THE ENERGY CRISIS

Audubon chapter members can have a role in solving the world energy crisis. Today the U.S. imports half its oil; the U.S. is expected to increase its use of coal by 150% by the year 2000. But it need not be that way.

National Audubon has developed an energy plan, which is reported in the July issue of *Audubon*. The plan shows that if we were using energy in an economically efficient manner, we would use only half the energy we use today. If the Audubon plan were implemented, we could almost eliminate oil imports and increase coal production far less than is now thought necessary. This would greatly reduce environmental degradation and because it is the most cost-efficient way of solving our energy problems, it would optimize our economic well-being.

For this to happen every household and every business must do its

part. That is where all of us come in. It has been suggested that the Bay Area Audubon chapters consider the start of a pilot program to encourage Audubon members and our local communities to conserve energy and water. If the program is successful, it will be implemented by many other chapters in the state.

An advisory group is going to meet in parallel with the next Bay Area Audubon Council meeting to help devise a plan that Bay Area chapters will then consider implementing. PG&E has promised to help us with the planning of this effort and may also be able to help in its execution.

GGAS will be represented at the advisory group meeting, to be held at the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge on July 18. Volunteers will be needed to organize GGAS efforts and to implement the program this fall. You do not need prior experience, just an interest and willingness to work. If you want to help, contact the GGAS office (843-2222).

—JOYCE DAVIS, *Conservation Committee Chair*

### A MISTAKE BY THE BAY?

Big projects with magic names—and public funding—often prove as difficult to kill as the legendary Medusa. Such may be the case of the original plan conceived by the City of Alameda to construct a trash recycling and power plant atop its terminated dump, popularly known as Mount Trashmore. Despite the worthy purpose of recycling solid waste, this structure has been branded an “environmental disaster” and vigorously opposed by the East Bay Regional Park District and nearly all local environmental organizations. The plant’s stack would loom above Doolittle Pond, a haven for birdlife on the edge of San Leandro Bay, and would be close to an Oakland Airport flight path.

After these protests and a more careful reappraisal, Alameda decided to apply for a site at the foot of Davis St. in San Leandro where Oakland trash is being sorted and recycled since the closing of the bayside dump. However, the addition of an Alameda plant at Davis St. is being protested by some local residents and there is new pressure to return to Mount Trashmore.

We suggest that interested GGAS members, particularly those who reside in Alameda, maintain a close watch on this ill-conceived project which could menace our new San Leandro Bay Regional Shoreline. The State Solid Waste Management Board, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers all exercise authority or have concerns over such projects on Bay shorelines.

—PAUL COVEL, *East Bay Regional Subcommittee*

**ADDITIONAL EAST BAY NOTE:** The regional subcommittee is following plans of the East Bay Regional Park District to carry out a controlled burn in the test area near Lake Chabot and to extend the existing fire control zone into Wildcat Canyon.

### LEAST TURN STUDY

By June 6 approximately 70 nests had been counted at the study site at the Alameda Naval Air Station and six chicks had hatched. Most nests have been established within the newly fenced area (see the June *Gull*, page 81) which is expected to add necessary protection to the young as more continue to hatch.

### CLEAN AIR ACT IN JEOPARDY

Action has already been taken in Washington, D.C., to weaken the Clean Air Act, one of the most important environmental safeguards in the nation. Pressures from industrial and auto interests to dilute this act, coupled with the attitude of the Reagan administration, will make for a tough fight ahead. In response to this threat, the Bay Area Clean Air Coalition was formed last May to plan strategy on the local level. For information on their activities, contact the GGAS office. At the national level, information regarding the act can be obtained from Steve Jordan or Chris Palmer at National Audubon Society's office, 645 Pennsylvania Ave. SE, Washington, D.C. 20003 (202-547-9009).

—CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

## Yosemite — Higher off the Beaten Track

Much traveled and seldom explored, the Tioga Pass Rd. (Hwy. 120) is not only one of the most scenic roads in the world, but its roadsides are full of interesting mountain birds. Leading from Crane Flat in Yosemite National Park, it ends at Mono Lake east of the Sierra crest.

As a sequel to a guide to birds of lower elevations in northern Yosemite published in *The Gull* (June, 1978), this article is intended to be a brief guide to the birds of higher elevations. As in the first article, unless otherwise mentioned, all records refer to breeding birds and only species that often elude the casual visitor. A comprehensive review of Yosemite birds can be found in *Birds of the Yosemite Sierra* by David Gaines (Cal-Syl Press, Oakland, 1977), available at the Park's visitors' centers.

**Access:** In years of heavy snow the road may not be open until mid-June and many of the side roads are not accessible until early July. In dry years (such as 1981) most of the area is accessible by early June.

**Mileage:** Distances given are approximate, starting at the Chevron station at Crane Flat, Yosemite, heading east. All of the places named

are easily found on the Yosemite map available at all Park entrance stations.

In the controlled-burn sections along the first three miles of the Tioga road, most members of the woodpecker family that breed in Yosemite have been seen in recent years, including Williamson's Sapsucker and Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker. Pull off the road where it's safe (there is no official parking) and check the dead trees, especially in the more recent burns.

**GIN FLAT** (3 miles). Walk along the road to Tamarack Flat Campground (closed now to cars) for about one-half mile to an open flat area. Dusky Flycatchers are prominent in the shrubbery and open forest. Yellow-rumped and Hermit Warblers, both common at the forest edge, are great fun to identify by ear here because some of their songs sound very similar at this location. Cassin's Finches are often singing in small groups. Rarely, Purple Finches are present for ready comparison. From here on up grade, Cassin's Finch is the only "red finch" you are likely to encounter until they meet House Finches in Lee Vining on the east side. Purple Finches are rare transients at higher elevations and east of the crest.

**SIESTA LAKE** (13 miles)

**ROAD TO WHITE WOLF CAMPGROUND** (14 miles)

**ROAD TO YOSEMITE CREEK CAMPGROUND** (14.3 miles;

*closed to cars in 1981*)

**MEADOWS ALONG TIOGA PASS ROAD BEYOND RED FIR FOREST** (15-20 miles)

(Cumulatively, much of this is referred to as "McSwain Meadows" on the Hetch Hetchy Quadrangle.)

These four stops are good places to look for Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers, Williamson's Sapsuckers, Pine Grosbeaks and many other mountain meadow birds. **Siesta Lake** is *the* place if you are in a hurry. If the birds aren't right at the highway, walk around the lake to the open areas on the east and south sides. **White Wolf** (campground and cabins) is a delightful place to stay overnight. Check especially the meadows behind the stables. A walk to Harden Lake in the early summer will reward you with many warblers and flycatchers among the willow-alder thickets along the creek. Calliope Hummingbirds nest here — the only hummingbird that breeds in the Sierra. In late June hordes of Rufous Hummingbirds invade the flowering meadows of the higher elevations on their way south from their northern breeding grounds. Anna's Hummingbirds have been seen up to the 8,000-foot elevation.

The best birding and the most undisturbed habitat can be yours, and often yours alone, by working your way into the meadows in the vicinity

of the Tioga Rd./Yosemite Creek road intersection, especially along the first mile of the road to Yosemite Creek. The meadows are hidden from view of the roads, but after a few minutes of struggle with the fallen logs of the surrounding forest, you are rewarded with many undisturbed and unexplored pockets of meadow habitat. Don't trample through the grass, stay at the edges. That's where the birds are. Red-breasted and Williamson's Sapsucker, Hairy, White-headed and Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers nest here. Pileated Woodpeckers have been seen. Pine Grosbeaks are regular; Evening Grosbeaks and Red Crossbills can be seen on most visits. Lincoln's Sparrows nest in the meadow. The dense fir forest along these meadows gives you your best chance to compare singing Hammond's (rare here) and Dusky Flycatchers (common). Above this elevation, in the open forests of the high country and east of Yosemite, you will most likely encounter Dusky Flycatchers. The coniferous forest at the edges of these meadows is the favorite breeding habitat of Ruby-crowned Kinglets, readily told by their loud rolling song, so different from Golden-crowned Kinglets and Brown Creepers which share their habitat. Many Hermit Thrushes can be heard from the red fir forest. Yellow-rumped, MacGillivray's and Wilson's Warblers are the only warblers known to nest in these meadows, but other warbler species can often be found in late summer and fall.

**MAY LAKE TURNOFF** (33 miles). If you are a good hiker and acclimated to the high altitude, take the road to May Lake and hike up Mt. Hoffman, located in the center of Yosemite. Good birding is to be had along the way—Blue Grouse, William's Sapsucker, Mountain Bluebirds—and a view of all of Yosemite from the top.

**OLMSTED POINT** (35 miles). Follow the trail from the middle of the parking lot to the sparse forest just below. Listen for the low booming sound of Blue Grouse in the trees. This is one of the more dependable and convenient spots for this species, though they can be found anywhere along the road up to tree line.

**TENAYA LAKE** (37 miles). A good place to picnic. Watch for Clark's Nutcrackers, Mountain Bluebirds, Spotted Sandpipers. Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers have been seen. Check the lake for water birds which occasionally stop over on migration. California Gulls will be most common; they nest on Mono Lake, 20 miles to the east.

**TUOLUMNE MEADOWS** (45 miles). Inquire about recent bird sightings at the visitors' center which is now located three-quarters of a mile before you reach the store, campground and gas station. Red Crossbills, usually undependable at other locations, have been seen regularly

around the campground. A little exploring around the meadows may turn up most of the mountain birds so far mentioned. Dusky Flycatcher is the only breeding *Empidonax* here.

**MONO PASS TRAILHEAD (51 miles).** A walk along Parker Pass Creek to Spillway Lake (an easy, almost level, eight-mile trail) will get you almost to tree line. Gray-crowned Rosy Finches nest here and Horned Larks and Water Pipits can be seen. The latter have recently been discovered to nest in the Yosemite Sierra. Mountain Bluebirds are common. In late summer and fall, check the low willow thickets along Parker Pass Creek for "up-mountain wanderers"; presumably birds that finished nesting at lower elevations or the young of that year. Most common among them are Orange-crowned Warblers, House Wrens and Lesser Goldfinches. But such "exotics" as Scrub Jays and Western Kingbirds have been seen in the high country in July and August. (Nobody really knows whether these are birds from altitudes just below or whether they are migrating south from northern breeding grounds.) In late August and September watch for flocks of Gray-crowned Rosy Finches about one-and-one-half miles from the Mono Pass trailhead. The birds occasionally feed in the barren sandy areas along the trail and rest in flocks in the surrounding lodgepole pines.

Between the Mono Pass trailhead and Tioga Lake, you leave Yosemite National Park and enter Inyo National Forest.

#### **TIOGA LAKE (53 miles)**

#### **ELLERY LAKE (55 miles)**

These two stops are the lazy birder's spot for Gray-crowned Rosy Finches. At Ellery Lake, park just before you get to a green bridge. The finches have nested under the bridge. They are most easily found in the snow field across from the bridge and especially at the west end of Tioga Lake.

Between Tioga and Ellery Lake is the turnoff to Saddlebag Lake. From the Saddlebag resort at the end of the two-and-one-half mile road, take the boat taxi across the lake into the heart of the high country. You'll find Clark's Nutcrackers, Dusky Flycatchers, Gray-crowned Rosy Finches and breathtaking views of the Conness Glacier. This area is usually not open before July 4. For hiking beyond the north side of the lake a Wilderness Permit is required (obtainable at the Lee Vining Ranger Station).

**LEE VINING CANYON TURNOFF (60 miles).** After a precipitous descent from Ellery Lake watch for the first road to your right. Follow signs to Big Bend Campground. After a mile, check the meadow on your left for Willow Flycatchers and the sagebrush on the opposite side

of the road for Green-tailed Towhees and Brewer's Sparrows. This is a good place to compare the songs of Green-tailed Towhee and Fox Sparrows; they sound much less similar here than in more northern parts of the Sierra. Another mile will bring you to the end of the paved road and a good place to park. There is abundant bird life in the riparian tangle along Lee Vining Creek, especially warblers and flycatchers. This is one of the best places to check for vagrants. In particular, keep in mind Broad-tailed Hummingbirds and Virginia's and Nashville Warblers — all of which have been suspected to nest in the eastern Sierran canyons.

Return to the Tioga Pass Rd. and continue east. Just before you reach Hwy. 395, stop at the National Forest Ranger Station on your right and get a map of the surrounding area if you want to explore further.

Where the Tioga Pass Rd. meets Hwy. 395 turn left to the town of Lee Vining, which has motels, stores, gas stations and, in the center of town, the **MONO LAKE INFORMATION CENTER**. The center is open until 9 p.m. in the summer. It has the latest information on the status of Mono Lake and its threatened bird populations plus interesting books, maps and tips to good birding spots.

If you can't find anyone to tell you where to check for birds, here are two suggestions:

**MONO COUNTY PARK.** Follow Hwy. 395 north to the sign for the Mono County Park which is located on the north side of Mono Lake. From the parking lot walk toward the lake for waterbirds and a close-up view of the famous tufa towers. Check the willows, cottonwoods and meadow at the parking area for land birds. This is also a good spot for vagrants.

**WEST PORTAL ROAD.** From the intersection of Hwys. 395 and 120 drive 8.4 miles (exactly) south on Hwy. 395 to a wide, graveled road on your left (east). Take this road for about a mile into undisturbed sagebrush country. Pinon Jays, Gray Flycatchers, Sage Thrashers, Sage Sparrows and Brewer's Sparrows can all be seen from the road against another wondrous view of the Sierra, the Aeolian Buttes, the Mono Craters and Mono Lake. This is best done in the morning.

—MARIE MANS

## Pelagic Trips Scheduled

Fall pelagic trips to view marine mammals and birds are scheduled for August 23; September 19, 20, 27; October 3, 4, 10, 11, 17 and 18. Past trips have produced sightings of albatross, shearwaters, petrels, jaegers, alcids, dolphin, whales and other species of birds and mammals not usually seen from land. Trips will depart from Monterey Harbor. For full information contact Debi Love Millichap, 302 Oxford Way, Santa Cruz, CA 95060.

## Whale Trip, July 19

The Whale Center is offering a Humpback Whale-watch trip to the Farallon Islands on July 19. A Blue Whale trip is scheduled from Monterey on September 13. Costs are \$30 for Whale Center members and \$35 for non-members. Mail checks to the Whale Center, 3929 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, CA 94611. Call 654-6621 for additional information.

## Further Mono Lake Doings

In addition to the GGAS fund-raising activities mentioned earlier in *The Gull*, the following events should be noted:

**ANGEL ISLAND PICNIC.** The Mono Lake Committee is sponsoring a festive picnic day on Angel Island, Sunday, August 9. All proceeds will go toward efforts to save the lake. Gourmet foods and wine will abound and participants may sail to the island in a choice of power or sailboats donated by Bay Area yachtsmen or, if preferred, may take the ferry (on their own) from San Francisco or Tiburon.

The donation for this gala picnic is \$25 per person. Checks may be made payable to the Mono Lake Committee (not tax deductible), the National Audubon Society/Mono Lake Fund or Friends of the Earth foundations/Mono Lake Fund (both tax deductible). Please mail to Grace de Laet, 37 Calhoun Terrace, San Francisco, CA 94133. For more information, contact her at 398-6744.

**FREE SUMMER FIELD TRIPS AT MONO LAKE.** (See the June Gull, page 84)

**SUMMER SLIDE SHOWS.** Slide shows offered free to the public each Friday and Saturday night, June 12-September 12, 8:30 p.m., at the Mono Lake Visitor Center in Lee Vining.

**BIKE-ATHON and BUCKET WALK.** Bike riders leave from the reflecting pool in front of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power on September 1 and ride north along Hwy. 395. Bikers join with Bucket Walkers on Sunday, September 6, in Lee Vining to pour water from the pool and aqueduct back into the lake. An evening picnic follows.

For more information on the latter Mono events, contact the Mono Lake Committee, P.O. Box 29, Lee Vining, CA 93541 (714-647-6386).

## Letter to the Editor

Editor:

. . . The occasional articles on good birding spots or trips are an important feature and should definitely be continued. My one suggestion regarding the contents of such trips and the Observations column in general would be a greater emphasis on local birds and birding spots (say within 20-30 miles of Berkeley). Gas is too expensive and plain scarce to justify driving all over the state looking for rare birds. I would like to see an emphasis placed on rare or unusual birds within this radius and details on how to find them. The Christmas Bird Count shows that many unusual species are present every year, often at the same location, and I think it would be valuable to let others know how to find them.

. . . The only negative comment I feel I must make is about your comment on the condor. There are some of us who felt strongly enough about the Board's position to write them and state our objections to it. I do not think it is fair to say the members are overwhelmingly in favor of it when less than a dozen responded by phone. Was I the only person to write the Board and object to their opinion? I certainly hope not. I do know that I received no acknowledgement from the Board that they received this letter or that any mention of letters for or against the condor policy was made in *The Gull* with the exception of Paul Covell's letter in the July-August, 1980, issue and the accompanying response by Board member Dan Murphy.

—MALCOLM J. SPROUL, *Berkeley*

*According to the office file, GGAS has received ten letters expressing approval of the Board policy and three against. Phone calls were all approving and most said they had also written to the Department of Fish and Game Commission as a result of the GGAS Condor Alert mailed to all members in July, 1980.*

—Editor

## Emory's Swan Song

Since November, 1979, the voice on the office phone at GGAS has been mine—just one of the many tasks I performed as Executive Director of the chapter, but probably one of the most challenging. What do you say to a person who wants to know if the office has any frozen birds or what the incubation period is for the Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush of SE Asia? Diplomacy, an active imagination and some frantic research in our library were often the only devices that saved me. To put it mildly, I have learned a lot and I want to thank you for the opportunity to have worked for Golden Gate Audubon.

I leave my job feeling confident in the GGAS Board of Directors and positive that the strong Conservation Committee, the backbone of any environmental organization, will keep up the excellent work it has demonstrated to date. I feel confident and yet there is still much work that needs attention. There are nine other committees that need more volunteers in order to continue their work: Publicity, Programs, Education, Finance, Hospitality, Emeryville Crescent, Extended Field Trips, Membership and regular Field Trips. If you have an interest in any of these areas, give me a call during July at the office to find out more about them and when they meet.

Now more than ever, we need to live our convictions. People concerned about their natural surroundings and the quality of their environment need to dig in, latch on and communicate. Find an issue or something close to heart, be it Mono Lake, a plot of undeveloped land, the condor, the California coast or the Owens Valley Mallow and get to know it and understand it as best possible. Enjoy it, marvel at the beauty and watch out for it. This way we can help secure the future of those natural areas and the quality we need so vitally. From this base of conviction, attempt to counter the almost daily round of blows to the environment.

And if the odds ever appear too overwhelming, recollect a favorite memory—the chattering of swifts as they slice through the air, the roar of a special mountain stream, the calming stillness of the high desert, or the stunning grace of a whale off the coast. Take assurance in your convictions and forge ahead.

—JERRY EMORY, *outgoing GGAS Executive Director*

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Jakob Wintsch

Blanche Mack

### For California Condor

#### Gift of

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Memorial and honorary gifts and bequests will be used as specified by the donors. Acknowledgments will be made in *The Gull* and personally by the Corresponding Secretary, Minnie Groshong. Please send checks made out to the Golden Gate Audubon Society to: Corresponding Secretary, GGAS, 2718 Telegraph Avenue, #206, Berkeley, CA 94705. All gifts are tax deductible.



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July-August 1981

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Mail for all individuals listed above should be sent to the GGAS office.

Send address changes to office promptly; Post Office does not forward *THE GULL*. Monthly meetings: second Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Joint membership — local and national \$20 per year (individual); \$25 (family); includes *AUDUBON* Magazine and *THE GULL*; to join, make checks payable to National Audubon Society and send to GGAS office to avoid delay in receiving *THE GULL*. Membership renewals should be sent directly to the National Audubon office. Subscriptions to *THE GULL* separately \$5 per year; single issues 75¢. High school and college student membership \$13.50 per year. Senior citizen individual, \$13.50, senior citizen family, \$15.50.

The Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. was established January 25, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948.

**The Gull deadline is the first of the month for the following month.**